QUICK LOADING PERISTALTIC PUMP

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates generally to a pump and more particularly relates to a peristaltic pump that provides quick and sanitary loading of a fluid tube.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Generally described, a peristaltic pump includes a number of pads, drums, or arms rotating within a pair of outer discs. A tube with a fluid to be transported therein generally is positioned adjacent to the drums and a fixed outer surface. As the drums rotate, the fluid within the tube is pushed along and caused to move through the tube. In other words, the fluid is forced along by means of contractions produced mechanically on the flexible tubing.

Peristaltic pumps have been used in the beverage industry with respect to varying types of fluids. One issue associated with a peristaltic pump is the loading and unloading the fluid tube. Loading the tube may be relatively uncomplicated in that the rollers may advance the tube through the overall housing of the pump. Unloading the tube, however, may result in some spillage of the fluid within the housing of the pump. Such spillage may be a concern from an ease of operation point of view and otherwise.

Further, a peristaltic pump generally provides a fixed number of rollers and a fixed pump speed. As such, the pump may not accommodate fluids of varying viscosity or the desire for varying pump speeds. In other words, the pump generally is designed for one specific type of fluid

There is a desire therefore, for a peristaltic pump that is easy and clean to use. Such a pump may be quickly and easily modified for varying fluids and speeds.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention thus provides a peristaltic pump for transporting a fluid within a flexible tube having a first end, a middle portion, and a second end. The peristaltic pump may include a roller assembly positioned for rotation, a first door positioned adjacent to the roller assembly and pivotable about a first direction, and a second door positioned adjacent to the roller assembly and pivotable about a second direction. The first door and the second door may pivot open and the middle portion of the flexible tube may be positioned about the roller assembly.

The peristaltic pump further may include a base such that the roller assembly may be positioned therein and the doors may be pivotably attached thereto. The base may include a tube inlet and a tube outlet positioned thereon. The base also may include an indent for the roller assembly to be positioned therein. The base may include a number of base hinges for pivoting the doors. The doors may include hinges for pivoting about the base.

The first door may include a wall positioned adjacent to the roller assembly so as to define a tube run therein. The second door may include a tube guide positioned thereon. The second door may include an indent for the roller assembly to be positioned therein. The peristaltic pump may include locking mean positioned thereon for the first door and the second door. The base, the first door, and/or the second door may be made out of an acetal resin.

The roller assembly may include a number of rollers mounted on a number of discs. The discs may include a number of roller mounting locations such that the number of rollers may be modified. The roller assembly may include a number of replaceable rollers.

The peristaltic pump further may include a pump motor in communication with the roller assembly. The pump motor may be a variable speed motor.

A further embodiment of the present invention may provide a peristaltic pump system for pumping a predetermined type of fluid within a flexible tube. The system may include a variable speed motor and a roller assembly positioned for rotation in communication with the pump motor. The roller assembly may

include a variable number of rollers. The variable speed motor may include about five (5) to about 120 rpm. The variable number of rollers may include about one (1) to about six (6) rollers.

A method of the present invention may provide for pumping a fluid within a flexible tubing with a peristaltic pump. The peristaltic pump may have a pump motor and a roller assembly. The method may include selecting a first predetermined fluid, selecting a first speed for the pump motor based upon the first predetermined type of fluid, selecting a first number of rollers for the roller assembly based upon the first predetermined type of fluid, and pumping the first predetermined type of fluid with the first speed and the first number of rollers.

The method further may include selecting a second predetermined fluid, a second speed for the pump motor, and a second number of rollers and pumping the second predetermined type of fluid with the second speed and second number of rollers.

The first predetermined type of fluid may include coffee, the first speed may include about 30 to 70 rpm, and the first number of rollers may include about three (3) to about four (4) rollers. The first predetermined type of fluid may include orange juice, the first speed may include about 45 to 100 rpm, and the first number of rollers may include about two (2) to about three (3) rollers.

These and other features of the present invention will become apparent upon review of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments when taken in conjunction with the drawings and the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a schematic view of a peristaltic pump system of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of a peristaltic pump of the present invention with the door and the lid open.

Fig. 3 is a further perspective view of the peristaltic pump of the present invention with the door and the lid open.

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the base of the peristaltic pump of Fig. 2 without the roller assembly.

Fig. 5 is an exploded view of the roller assembly of the peristaltic pump of Fig. 2

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to the drawings in which like numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views, Fig. 1 shows a schematic view a peristaltic pump system **100** of the present invention. The peristaltic pump system **100** moves a fluid **110**. The fluid **110** may be a beverage, a concentrate, an additive, or any other type of liquid. The present invention is not limited by the nature or the flow characteristics of the fluid **110**. Specifically, the peristaltic pump system **100** may be used with a fluid or fluids **110** of varying viscosities and/or other types of flow characteristics.

The fluid **110** may be held in a fluid container **120**. The fluid container **120** may be any structure designed to hold a fluid **110**, including a bag in box or other type of beverage or concentrate container. The peristaltic pump system **100** may transport the fluid

110 from the fluid container **120** to a dispensing area **130**. The dispensing area **130** may be a cup or other type of container, a mixing area, or any other type of destination.

The peristaltic pump system **100** may move the fluid **110** from the fluid container **120** to the dispensing area **130** via a length of flexible tubing **140**. The flexible tubing **140** may be made out of silicone, silicone composite, or similar types of polymers. The flexible tubing **140** preferably is made out of food grade material. The flexible tubing **140** may have any desired length and/or diameter.

Figs. 2 through 5 show a peristaltic pump **150** for use with the peristaltic pump system **100**. The peristaltic pump **150** may include a base **160**. The base **160** may include a tube inlet **170** and a tube outlet **180**. The tube inlet **170** and the tube outlet **180** may be formed within the base **160** and may be sized to accommodate the diameter of the flexible tubing **140**. The tube inlet **170** and the tube outlet **180** may be spaced apart by about ninety degrees (90°) to about one hundred eighty degrees (180°). Any angle between zero (0°) and one hundred eighty (180°), however, may be used.

The base **160** also may have a roller assembly indent **190**. The roller assembly indent **190** may be sized to accommodate a roller assembly as described below. The indent **190** may have the diameter of about 5.3 to about 14 centimeters and may have a depth of about 30 to about 50 millimeters. Any diameter or depth, however, may be used so as to accommodate the shape and size of the roller assembly. The roller assembly indent **190** may have a motor shaft aperture **200** so as to accommodate a motor shaft as described below. The size of the aperture **200** depends upon the size of the motor shaft.

The base **160** further may have a number of hinges, a first hinge **210** and a second hinge **220**. The hinges **210**, **220** may be made out of shafts and/or cylinders designed to accommodate the shafts. In this embodiment, the first hinge **210** of the base **160** has a shaft **215** extending vertically and the second hinge **220** has a cylinder **225** extending horizontally. Any orientation of shafts and/or cylinders, however, may be used.

The peristaltic pump **150** further may include a door **230**. The door **230** may be positioned on and enclose the base **160**. The door **230** may have a hinge **240** that accommodates the first hinge **210** of the base **160**. As above, the hinge **240** may include a shaft or a cylinder to accommodate a shaft. In this embodiment, the shaft **215** of the first hinge **210** of the base **160** accommodates a cylinder **245** of the door **230**.

The door **230** further may include a wall **250**. The wall **250** may include a first side **260** and a second side **270**. The first side **260** may accommodate a tube run **280**. The tube run **280** may be sized to accommodate the flexible tubing **140** between a roller assembly as described below and the position of the first side **260** of the wall **250** so as to provide the pumping action as described below. The wall **250** preferably is substantially semicircular shaped. The door **230** may extend from the hinge **240** about the base **160** to about the tube outlet **180**. The door **230** further may have a mating end **290** designed for a snap fit or other type of mating about the tube outlet **180** of the base **160**.

The peristaltic pump **150** further may include a lid **300**. The lid **300** may be sized to accommodate the size and shape of the

base **160**. The lid **300** also may have a hinge **310**. The hinge **310** may accommodate the second hinge **220** of the base **160**. In this embodiment, the hinge **310** may include a shaft **315** to accommodate the cylinder **225** of the second hinge **220**. The lid **300** further may include a number of tube guides **320**. The tube guides **320** may be sized to accommodate the flexible tubing **140** therein.

The lid **300** further may include a lock aperture **330**. The lock aperture **330** may coordinate with the shaft **215** of the first hinge **210** of the base **160**. A nut **335** or other type of locking device may be attached to the shaft **215** so as to lock the lid **300** in place.

The lid **300** further may include a roller assembly indent **340** similar to the roller assembly indent **190** described below with respect to the base **160**. The roller assembly indent **340** of the lid **300** also may be sized to accommodate the roller assembly as described below.

The components of the peristaltic pump **150** in general, and the base **160**, the door **230**, and the lid **300** in specific, may be made out of polymers, composites, metals or any other type sufficiently rigid materials. For example, polycarbonate, polyethylene, acrylic or similar types of materials may be used. Further, The base **160**, the door **230**, and the lid **300** also may be made out of Delrin®, an acetal resin sold by E.I. Dupont de Nemours & Company of Wilmington, Delaware.

The peristaltic pump **150** also may include a roller assembly **350** as is shown in, for example, Fig. 5. The roller assembly **350** may include a number of rollers **360**. The rollers **360** also may be made out of Delrin® or similar materials. Further, the

rollers **360** also may be made out of any material with good wear characteristics such as polycarbonate, Delrin, or similar types of materials. The rollers **360** may have a diameter of about ten (10) to about thirty (30) millimeters and a length of about 28 to 35 centimeters. The rollers **360**, however, may have any desired size or shape. The diameter of the rollers **360** may be adjusted to accommodate the diameter of the flexible tube **140**. About one (1) to about six (6) rollers **360** generally are used, although any number of rollers **360** may be used. Each roller **360** may have an axle **370** either extending therethrough or molded into each roller **360** and extending out of the lateral ends thereof. The axles **370** may have any convenient size.

The roller assembly **340** also may include a number of outer discs **380**. The discs **380** hold both ends of the rollers **360** in place. The discs **380** also may be made out of polycarbonate or any other type of polymer, metal, or other materials with sufficiently rigid characteristics. As is shown, a first disc **390** and a second disc **400** may be used.

The discs **380** may have a number of mating members **410** positioned thereon. In this embodiment, the first disc **390** may have a number of female members **420** while the second disc **400** has a number of male members **430**. Further, each of the mating members **410** also may include an internal member **440**. The mating members **410** may be arrange in any desired order so as to ensure that the discs **380** stay attached.

The discs **380** also may include a number of roller apertures **450** positioned or formed therein. The roller apertures **450**

may be sized so as to accommodate the axles **370** of the rollers **360**. Any number of roller apertures **450** may be used so as to vary the number of rollers **360** that the roller assembly **350** as a whole may use. One of the discs **390, 400** also may have drive shaft aperture **460** positioned therein so as to accommodate a drive shaft as described below. In this embodiment, the first disc **390** may have the aperture **460** positioned therein.

The first disc **390** may be positioned within the roller assembly indent **190** of the base **160** while the second disc **400** may be positioned within the roller assembly indent **340** of the lid **300**. The roller assembly **350** thus may rotate within the base **160** and the lid **300**.

Referring again to Fig. 1, the peristaltic pump system **100** further may include a pump motor **500**. The pump motor **500** may be a conventional DC motor or similar type of device. The motor **500** may be about a twenty four (24) volt DC motor. Other voltages also may be used. The pump motor **500** also may be a servomotor, a gear motor with a controller, an AC motor, and similar types of drive devices. The speed of the motor **500** preferably is adjustable. The speed of the pump motor **500** may range from about one (1) rpm to about 140 rpm. The pump motor **500** may include a drive shaft **510** so as to provide rotational force.

Operation of the pump motor **500** and the peristaltic pump system **100** as a whole may be controlled by a control system **520**. The control system **520** may vary the speed of the motor **500** and the time of operation. The control system **520** may include a microprocessor or a similar type of control device.

In use, the desired number of rollers **360** may be inserted within the roller assembly **350**. The roller assembly **350** is then positioned within the roller assembly indent **190** of the base **160** and mounted on to the drive shaft **510** of the pump motor **500**. The controller **520** may be set with a predetermined speed for the pump motor **500**.

The flexible tubing **140** may then be inserted within the tube inlet **170** of the base **160**. The tubing **140** may then be wrapped around the roller assembly **350** along the tube run **280** and out via the tube outlet **180**. The door **230** may then be closed such that the tubing **140** is positioned between the second side **270** of the door **230** and the roller assembly **350**. The lid **300** may then be closed and locked. The pump motor **500** then may be activated such that the peristaltic pump system **100** pumps the fluid **510** from the fluid container **120** through the flexible tubing **140** to the dispensing area **130**.

Once the fluid container **120** is depleted, the flexible tubing **140** may be removed from the peristaltic pump system **100**. Specifically, the lid **300** may be unlocked and opened. The door **230** also may be swung open and the tubing **140** may be removed from the tube outlet **180** and the tube inlet **170**. Any open ends of the tubing **140** may be pinched off if needed. Such open ends, however, need not travel through the peristaltic pump system **100**. A new tube **140** may then be installed. The tubing **140** thus may be installed and removed without any spillage of the fluid **110**.

The number of the rollers **360** and the speed of the pump motor **500** may be varied according to the flow characteristics of the

fluid **110** to be used. For example, coffee may have a diluent to concentrate ratio of about 30 to 1 and may use about three (3) to about four (4) rollers **360** with a pump motor **500** speed of about thirty (30) to about seventy (70) rpm, with about 64 rpm preferred. Orange juice concentrate may be more viscous such that a ratio of about 5 to 1 may be used. The pump **150** therefore may use about two (2) to about three (3) rollers **360** and operate at about forty five (45) to about one hundred twenty (120) rpm, with about 82 rpm preferred. Cappuccino concentrate may be more viscous still and have a ratio of about two (2) to about one (1). The pump **150** again may only use about two (2) rollers **360**, but run at a higher speed of about 95 rpm. The pump **150** thus can accommodate such varying flow characteristic of the fluid **110**.

It should be apparent that the foregoing relates only to the preferred embodiments of the present invention and that numerous changes and modifications may be made herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the following claims and the equivalents thereof.